

St. Stanislaus Church
524 West Mitchell Street (Northwest
corner South Fifth and West Mitchell Streets)
Milwaukee
Milwaukee County
Wisconsin

HABS No. WIS-159

HABS
WIS
40-MILWA,
8-

PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Eastern Office, Division of Design and Construction
143 South Third Street
Philadelphia 6, Pennsylvania

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

ST. STANISLAUS CHURCH

WIS
40-MILWAU
8

Location: 524 West Mitchell Street (Northwest corner South Fifth and West Mitchell Streets), Milwaukee, Milwaukee County, Wisconsin.

Present Owner: Roman Catholic Church, Archdiocese of Milwaukee, Reverend Raymond A. Punda, pastor.

Present Occupant: St. Stanislaus parish.

Present Use: Parish church.

Brief Statement of Significance: First Polish church in Milwaukee and mother church for later Polish parishes. The building was selected for photographing principally for its architectural interest, reflecting as it does, a provincial interpretation of the great Baroque churches of Central Europe.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History

1. Date of erection: Cornerstone laid July, 1872, but work proceeded slowly as the principal building period appears to have been 1884-1894. During this period, the sanctuary was built, the roof covered with copper, the organ installed, and the interior painted. There is a note that the church was built without suteran, a Polish word meaning a below ground-level room usually used for living quarters. In this case it may mean basement.
2. Architect: The architect was Leonard A. Schmidtner, the Baron von Kowalski, who also designed the old Milwaukee Court House which stood on what is now Cathedral Square but no longer exists. There is a story told that a Chicago architect named Wierzbienca was paid \$800 for the plans, and who, when the footings failed, absconded with the fee.
3. Notes on alterations and additions: Major remodeling took place between 1895 and 1913, but it is not possible to break this down in detail. During this period, the three main entrances were surrounded by a simulated Gothic Revival porch, the archivolts of the principal windows in the lower part of the towers were changed from their original quasi-oriental form to

more Romanized versions, buttresses were added to the south and north sides and topped with statues of the twelve apostles, and the fleche was added over the crossing. During this period, the interior underwent extensive elaboration. The walls were faced with Wisconsin marble, marble altars, a new pulpit, and other decorations were added.

4. Important old views and references

- a. References: Diamond Jubilee Memorial Volume /of St. Stanislaus Church, South Fifth and West Mitchell Streets, Milwaukee, Wisconsin/ (1941).
- b. Important old views: The condition of the church before the 1895 - 1913 alterations is shown by two old views of the exterior--one dated 1880, and one dated 1883. These are in the possession of the parish.

- B. Historical Events Connected with the Structure: The first Polish Parochial school in the United States was established in 1866 in St. Stanislaus' parish.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement

1. Architectural Character: This building is somewhat unique among the churches of Milwaukee and the United States generally. The extremely tall towers with their curious combination of octagonal domes strongly suggest Middle European architecture. The buff Milwaukee brick, of which most of the exterior is constructed, has weathered a dark tone.
2. Condition of fabric: Kept in excellent repair and now undergoing extensive renovation.

B. Technical Description of Exterior

1. Overall dimensions: 67' (on Fifth St.) x 152' (on Mitchell St.).
2. General description of the exterior: The structure is built entirely of buff Milwaukee brick with some stone trim mostly confined to the Gothic elements on the lower part of the front that were added between 1895 - 1913. The most striking feature is the two towers which

rise from the ground and progress in three stages. The lower stage is square and contains one of the two secondary entrances with tall arched windows above. This stage is crowned with a simple brick cornice with brick dentils, and a high parapet. The second stage is a chamfered square with a heavy projecting cornice; the third stage similar and of almost equal height contains four clock faces on each tower. The towers are terminated with an octagonal dome and a slender octagonal lantern.

The sides of the church have five tall circle-headed windows between Gothic-type buttresses. A small fleche or lantern marks the sanctuary.

3. Chimney: One for the heating system. Originally the church was built without heating.
4. Openings
 - a. Doorways and doors: Main entrance consists of three double leaf wood panel doors set in circular-headed openings with Gothic surrounds. Side door in rear of north elevation.
 - b. Windows: Circular-headed windows of very long proportions filled with colored glass, no tracery.
5. Roof
 - a. Shape, covering: Gable roof with asphalt shingles. Towers covered with copper now in the process of being gilded.
 - b. Cornice: Decorative brick cornice around three sides. Towers have variety of cornice treatments ranging from brick to elaborate metal covered wood projecting cornices of classical design.

C. Technical Description of Interiors

1. General description of interiors: The present interior which seems to date from about 1913 is extremely rich in materials and in decoration. Walls are partly covered with Wisconsin marble and partly decorated with fresco. The ceiling, a suspended vault, is likewise elaborately painted. The chancel which is covered with a plaster half-dome has a ceiling treatment consisting of plaster ribs and painted medallions

all rich with gold and color. The chancel rail, the altars, and the pulpit are all heavy with gold plate and gold leaf.

2. Stairways: Stairway to choir loft and access stairs to clock towers.
 3. Lighting: Electric.
 4. Heating: Central type heating system.
- D. Site: Building faces east. Site is a crowded urban corner with no landscaping possible.

Prepared by Henry C. Edwards, Architect
National Park Service - 143 S.
Third Street, Phila. 6, Pa. -
August 1960

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